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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an ethnographic analysis of a controversial research project, the Putaney Study, as an argument for the involvement of anthropologists in research that is perceived to be potentially controversial. A research team from Putaney University initiated a research project to document the fertility attitudes and practices of 600 employed male heads of households receiving financial aid to dependent children (ADCU) from the Warsaw County Office of Public Assistance. The rationale for the paper is that a study of the factors which led to the success or failure of a particular research project can sometimes be as valuable as the data that the research was designed to collect. The ethnographic techniques of participant observation, taking detailed notes of events observed, and studying the whole as an integrated system of interacting parts, are well suited for such a study. The term "system" refers not to the structural subsystems of a project, but rather to the ideological ones which can cut across these subsystems. These ideologies can potentially lead to four levels of conflict which are analyzed in separate sections of the paper. The conclusion is that, to avoid opposition, ideological congruence must be attained within the research team and cooperation gained from the study population. If the latter process is successful, the potential opposition from other structural groups might be dramatically reduced. (Author/KC)

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THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF CONTROVERSY:

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ABORTION AND SALVAGING

OF A RESEARCH PROJECT

by

Tony Larry Whitehead

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Author's Statement

Tony Whitehead, a recent recipient of the Ph.D. degree in Social Anthropology, is currently Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Health Education, School of Public Health, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The author would like to thank Drs. John Hatch, Godfrey Hochbaum, and Guy Steuart for comments on earlier drafts of this paper, and Drs. Julia Crane and Steven Polgar for comments on later drafts.

Traditionally, anthropologists have tended to shun research that was perceived as potentially controversial. It has been commonly assumed that research which focuses on a sensitive social issue runs a high risk of not being completed because of its vulnerability to opposition from a variety of sources (Beals, 1969). Even if the research is completed, the primary payoff for the scholar is publication, which may not be forthcoming if the research turns out to be overly sensitive or ultracontroversial (Becker, 1966). If the scientist underestimates the political and ethical considerations and publishes anyway, it could bring negative consequences for the scientist, his profession, and his study population (Beals, 1969: 82-83).

It is the view of this writer, however, that if a scientist has the opportunity to contribute to the solution of an urgent social problem, then he[1] has a moral and professional obligation to do so. Ideally the purpose of any science is to try to improve the human condition. For a scholar to withdraw his skills from an urgent social problem, because of its potential

for controversy, represents a self-removal from the human moral community and leaves little upon which to justify his or her professional existence. Moreover, sometimes the most urgent problems have the potential for the greatest controversy.

Anthropologists can, perhaps, make a valuable contribution in analyzing the controversy itself. A study of the factors which led to the success or failure of a project can sometimes be as valuable as the data that the research was designed to collect (Cohen, 1976:16). Such ethnographic methods as historical reconstruction, participant observation, the extensive recording of events observed, and the analyses of these events as a systemic whole, are well suited for the study of process. The primary objective of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework to illustrate this point. The development of this scheme evolved from an analysis of the factors that led to the failure of an original research design. Its feasibility is illustrated in a discussion of the research team's success in salvaging the project.

The Putaney[2] Male Family and Fertility Study (PUMFFS)

Putaney is a multi-ethnic industrial city of nearly one million inhabitants. In 1971, a research team from Putaney University initiated a research project to document the fertility attitudes and practices of 600 unemployed male heads of households receiving financial aid to dependent children (ADCU)[3] from the Warsaw County Office of Public Assistance (WCOPA). The rationale for the study seemed quite sound. It was argued that if fertility research efforts continued to ignore the role of the male, family planning professionals would continue to be without meaningful theoretical formulation to help them understand why poor families tend to maintain relatively high birth rates in spite of smaller preferred family size (Fawcett, 1970:38) and an increasing availability of family planning information and services. It was also pointed out that the type of data the study proposed to yield would enhance efforts in family counseling, as well as influence agency policy to strengthen efforts to assist the family.

The study was reasonably well planned. While the proposal was being written, discussions were carried out with public assistance representatives at the state, regional and local levels. The state office was quite enthusiastic about the project, publicly endorsed it, and encouraged its regional and local offices to do the same. The director of the local office gave further encouragement with a letter to the project director which stated:

> . . . I agree with the general intent and plan for this study. It seems to me that if we are to be effective in family planning programs, the male head of the family should be involved. Such involvement should be predicated upon more knowledge of the attitudes and behavior of the low income male. In view of our critical staff situation, I would recommend that your proposal include provisions for meeting expenses of our staff in identifying the male heads of household and selecting from that group those who meet the criteria for participation in the study.

A reimbursement cost of $700 was included in the proposal's budget to be paid to WCOPA for drawing the study sample. It was estimated that in order to complete a total of 600 male respondents, approximately 800 ADCU families would have to be contacted. The total number of families receiving ADCU funds from WCOPA was estimated at about 2,500, with about an equal number of black and white recipients.

Families selected for the study were to have the following characteristics:

1. the family must be living in Warsaw County and have been receiving ADCU assistance for not less than one month;
2. the male respondent must be living with a wife either legal or common law in the same dwelling;
3. neither spouse could be institutionalized for extended treatment or care at the time of the study;
4. the female spouse must be in the reproductive period of life (15-44 years).

A letter was to be drafted, explaining the study objectives and requesting consent for participation from each potential respondent. Interviews were to be administered in an office to be leased by the research team. Each respondent would be paid ten dollars for traveling expenses to the interview site and for interview time (estimated to last for 40 minutes).

During the planning of these procedures the research team met with the representatives of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to WCOPA. CAC was composed of "lay persons appointed to safeguard the rights of welfare recipients through clarifying and recommending changes, if necessary, in welfare policy".[4] After having some of its recommended changes made in the proposal, CAC unanimously approved the project.

The proposal was quickly funded by a federal agency, and the research team was certain that it had the makings of what would be a successful and worthwhile project. But within three months after a July 1, 1971 funding, the project, as initially conceived, was dead.

Death to the Sex Study: The Anatomy of An Aborted Research Project

On August 31, 1971, the research team met with WCOPA district supervisors to brief them on how caseworkers were to draw the sample. Four days later the research team received word that caseworkers at one district strongly opposed the task of selecting the sample, and demanded a meeting with the research team.

A meeting was agreed upon for September 15 at the district office.

At the meeting, the research team was not kindly received after an introduction by the WCOPA executive director. A few caseworkers vociferously opposed the project. The reasons given were varied, sometimes contradictory, and vague. Following are some of the exchanges from that meeting:

First Caseworker (CW_1): Why do you think you can buy information by paying WCOPA $700 and our clients $10?

Assistant Director of Research (AD): The money is not to buy information madam, but to rightfully

pay agency and clients for time spent.

CW_1: But if that is the case, don't you think those amounts are much too small?

Second Caseworker (CW_2): Such research would be an exploitation of my Catholic caseload who are for the transmission of life not its destruction.

AD: Don't you think that you should allow members of your caseload to make their own interpretations of family planning?

CW_3: You people are going against the teachings of the famous theologians.

Director of Research (DR): Well, I am a devout Catholic and I definitely see the importance of family planning services, and research which would help in a more effective delivery of those services.

CW_2: You can't advocate this kind of research and call yourself a Catholic.

CW_4: If the man upstairs wanted to prevent a person from becoming pregnant, he would find a way.

CW_5: Why don't you people have a copy of the questionnaire you plan to use?

AD: The questionnaire is now being developed, and you can expect copies within two weeks.

DR: Look, we only want to help you better serve your clients, who haven't been treated too kindly by our economic system.

CW_6: I resent your implication that our government is not doing all it can for these people.

CW_7: This research can only have negative repercussions for WCOPA because we are already being criticized for pushing family planning down the throats of these people.

The meeting closed with a very vocal minority stating that they were against the research being done, especially through the welfare agency. After the meeting, however, a number of people who had not spoken earlier, gathered around the research team and gave the team the impression that they indeed favored the research. Thus,

the team left the meeting with the feeling that the project was still very much alive.

Unknown to the research team, the day after the meeting, members of the supervisory staff of WCOPA sent a letter to their executive director which stated:

> . . .We see the Putaney University Male Family and Fertility Study (PUMFFS) as an insult by its exploitative nature to both our clients and ourselves. We find the dangling of $10 before a male or any other client with extremely limited income, together with the offer of giving $700 to $1000 to a client-oriented service fund, a deplorable means of gathering a population to participate in a study which has no beneficial significance for either client or us as a participating agency. The study itself, regardless of how presented, carries with it an "announced" message that our clients and we are more suited than the rest of

of the community to participate in this study, which involves delving into one of the most intimate parts of an individual's life. Also, we feel that such involvement on our part would violate the provisions of the Department of Public Welfare Manual Section 1485---Confidentiality. The identifying information which is not essential for purposes directly connected with the administration of public assistance. We should categorically refuse to participate in this study.

A week later, a petition with the signatures of 43 caseworkers was sent to the executive director with the statement:

We refuse to participate in the study proposed by Putaney University. We find this request for names and family compositions a breach of confidentiality, as well as an insult to our clients. Furthermore,

at a time when the work load does not provide adequate service to the client, it is irresponsible to attempt this kind of study. May we refer you to Warsaw County Manual 1485. We do not think WCOPA needs $700 so desperately that we submit to this request. Nor do we feel that $10 is sufficient to entice a desperate person to bare all his personal life before other disinterested parties.

In the meantime, the research team received copies of flyers which were reputedly being distributed throughout WCOPA and among the client population. The two flyers distributed among the WCOPA staff included such items as:

> Fight back! Refuse to waste your time! Refuse to pry into your client's private lives! . . .Caseworkers have the time to to it! This is what the administration is saying again. They are proposing that caseworkers use their time to fill out

forms in another federal government study about clients' sex lives.

The flyer distributed to the client population boomed:

FOR TEN DOLLARS YOU CAN **TELL** PUTANEY UNIVERSITY ABOUT YOUR SEX LIVES!

Under this headline was a mock questionnaire which included such items as:

How many times per week do you have sex?

___ 1. 5-10 times?

___ 2. 10-20 times?

___ 3. 20-30 times?

___ 4. 30 or more times

On September 30, 1971, the project director received a letter from the WCOPA executive director which stated:

> Staff feeling is so negative that it would be detrimental to the ongoing functioning of the agency to attempt to cooperate with you on this study. If staff had been able

to support the study, I think we could have handled responsibly whatever negative reaction that might have been aroused in the community. I must admit, however, that since I did not anticipate the intensely charged reaction of staff, this expectation might also have proved to be invalid. As had been indicated, I believe, to you and to me, the essential objection of staff was not to the study being made, including paying male recipients, but to our agency having any connection with the study.

WCOPA was making a complete reversal from its earlier endorsement. It wanted nothing to do with the project and closed its files to the research team.

The research team however, was still not ready to give up on the project. They turned to another source for securing respondents: The National Welfare Rights Organization of Putaney (NWRO). The NWRO differs from any other organization whose stated mission is to

safeguard the rights of welfare recipients (CAC, for example), in that the NWRO is an independent organization made up of recipients themselves. In some quarters the NWRO was considered radical because of its sometimes non-traditional ways of achieving goals--a reflection of its independence of public funding, policies, and guidelines. The Putaney NWRO rejected the overtures of the research team. They were very critical of funds being provided to study welfare recipients, and none to help them (i.e., through the NWRO).

Meanwhile, the project was receiving opposition from elsewhere. The project director received a call from a correspondent of the Putaney Herald, one of the country's leading Black newspapers. He warned the project director that he had received a story that was not in the least bit favorable to the research, and if the research team could not clarify the purposes of the research project to him, he would be compelled to write the story. In the meantime the project director had begun to receive telephone calls at his home, encouraging him to drop the study of welfare fathers. The sources of these calls were never identified.

The project even began to experience difficulties within the University strucutre. The University Office of Community Relations (UORC) had stated opposition to the research even before the caseworkers' rebellion. In a meeting with members of the research team in early September, the following exchange took place:

UOCR: The study population, ADCU is too limited and not representative of welfare clients. ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) is more so.

Research Team (RT): That's true, but they are welfare recipients who are intact conjugal units, and we are interested in studying intact family units.

UOCR: Only uptight people will be willing to participate in the study, because of the ten dollar incentive.

RT: That is your opinion. We don't think so.

UOCR: WCOPA will select primarily Blacks for the study and this would not

be representative of ADCU or ADC. This proposal represents a dangerous approach since it will influence agency policy for the poor, especially poor Blacks.

RT: There is no way of knowing how many Blacks or Whites will be selected for the survey since the local welfare department does not keep records of race.

UOCR: Blacks are tired of being studied. Why don't you expand your study population to include middle class people. Keep it all to Whites. If you came into my house you would get a fast exit.

Even within the research team's home department there was strong opposition to the research, voiced by three female faculty members who frequently argued points similar to those made by UOCR: "The research represented further exploitation of Blacks and/or

the poor." But of all the problems that the project was now having, probably the most annoying were the conflicts within the research team itself. The most significant rift was between the project director and the assistant director. As opposition from outside the research team was mounting, the relationship between these two men was quickly deteriorating.

At this point there seemed to be little reason, or capacity, for continuing the project, and the research team began to consider preparing a report to the funding agency explaining why the project had failed. However, in order to do this, the team had to analyze what had happened. This necessitated a reconstruction of the controversial history surrounding the research, as well as a conceptualization of the interaction processes among and within the different groups that had a vested interest in the research being completed or aborted.

An Ethnographic Analysis: A Historical Reconstruction of the Factors Relevant to the Abortion of the PUMFFS Project

Most of the opposition to the PUMFFS project was rooted in a controversy which, at that time, universally surrounded public family planning programs. During the post two decades, population problems have become an issue of great concern both domestically and abroad. The extent of this concern is reflected in the more than three dozen countries that have adopted national family planning programs during this period, the billions of dollars annually alloted to the solution of problems related to population growth, and the large number of publications generated by these problems. The controversy has come primarily from the widespread inquiry: Why is there so much money being put into fertility control programs when so many other human needs continue to go unmet? Worldwide problems of racial, class, ethnic, and nationalistic antagonisms have resulted in a popular suspicion of family planning programs that are generally designed by the world's affluent and

directed primarily toward the world's poor. By the end o of the 1960's the association of family planning programs with contrived plots of genocide had become rather common (see (Stycos 1968:50-52, and Weisbord 1975). This had become particularly true in the United States, where many Blacks had come to equate public family planning programs as part of an anti-Black genocidal conspiracy (Hallow 1969, Rauch 1970, and Darity, et al. 1971).

Accusations of genocide were fueled by welfare policies adopted in Warsaw County and elsewhere which directed caseworkers to provide family planning information either on client request or on "identification of a social or health problem that might be alleviated by the use of family planning services".[5] It did not help matters that many people equated welfare recipients in this country with being Black, and that rising welfare costs had become a very sensitive social issue. Caseworkers who have traditionally been college-educated, middle class white persons, came to be seen by black opponents of family planning as conspiratorial lackeys who coerced indigent black women into curtailing their

fertility under the threat of stopping welfare checks if they didn't (Hallow 1969:535, 536).

These smoldering sentiments were brought to full explosion in Putaney by an act of the Putaney Community Action Program (PCAP) in 1969 when it contracted the Planned Parenthood Association of Putaney (PPAP) to establish family planning clinics in the eight Putaney neighborhoods (five predominantly white and three predominantly black) that PCAP had designated as poverty areas. The clinics were only established, however, in the three predominantly black communities. The reaction of black leaders and certain Catholic allies to this oversight was of such virulence that it resulted in a review by PCAP of its financial commitment to PPAP, a restructuring of PPAP's policy and administration (the resignation of some of its executive staff), and the temporary closing of clinics.

An Ethnographic Analysis: A Systems Approach to Understanding the Factors Relevant to the Abortion of the PUMFFS Project

Ethnography is the descriptive study of specific sociocultural systems. Sociocultural systems are characterized by structural relationships and ideologies shared by the units of that system in order to insure cooperation in the fulfillment of a common goal. In this sense, controversial research is carried out within a sociocultural system, in that the success of the research (functional goal) is dependent on the cooperation of more than just the investigator and his study population. One should also consider the relationships between the investigator and the funding agency, the investigator's sponsor (employer), co-workers, and collegial groups, as well as various public and private groups that may not have a direct relationship with the investigator, but become interested in the research because of their own relationship with the study population or other groups within the research system. However, each of these

units might have primary ideologies and goals of the research system. These incompatibilities give rise to conflict, the root cause of research controversy.

A number of writers have alluded to this systemic quality of social research, and the controversies that sometimes occur as a result of conflict between the various groups or subsystems (Fichter and Kolb 1953; Vidich and Bensman 1958; Vidich, Bensman, and Stein 1966; Becker 1966; Orlans 1967; and Beals 1969). These studies do not, however, realize their full potential because they are not concerned with the complexity of the systems concept. This oversight might be due to the confusion which has resulted from the varying uses of the systems concept in the literature (Burton 1974:23; Mouzelis 1974:396).

A closer analysis of structural relationships between the parts of a social system reveals other complexities which would include:

1. that the cooperating units, or subsystems of the system of analysis, may be systems in themselves with even smaller subsystemic units (Parsons, 1951).

2. that the relationships between the various individuals in the system are as important as those between the subsystemic parts (Lockwood, 1964);
3. that systems of more than two interacting parts may have multilateral as well as unilateral relationships, i.e., any subsystem or individual may be carrying on relationships with more than one other subsystem simultaneously;
4. that subsystems and individuals may have relationships with other systems outside of the system of analysis.

University-sponsored research, as was the case with the PUMFFS Project, can be used to illustrate the complexity of the relationships outlined above. The university is a large subsystem of the wider research system. It is also a system within itself, composed of the research team, the research team's home department, and other divisions and departments that might have some vested interest in the research. Each one of these smaller

subsystems are also systems in themselves, made up of smaller subsystems, or individual actors in systems of cooperative interaction.

The various subsystems and individuals within the university may be in one (unilateral) relationship with the research team, but may share other relationships with (1) other sybsystems of the university; (2) other subsystems within the wider research system (e.g. with the funding agency, public interest groups, or with the study population itself); and (3) other systems beyond the research system (e.g., with professional collegial groups).

This myriad of relationships creates the potential for conflict at four analytical levels. (1) The Intersystemic (between the research system and other social systems); (2) The Intrasystemic (between the subsystemic units within the research system); (3) The Intrasubsystemic or Interindividual (within the various subsystems of the research system; and (4) Intraindividual (within individuals who belong to systems or subsystems with incompatible functional ideologies).

Intersystemic Conflict in the Failure of the PUMFFS Project

All four types of conflict can be illustrated by the failure of the Putaney Study, although Intersystemic conflict was more a possibility than a reality. Because of the genocide issue there existed the possibility of a system of groups or individuals allied in their opposition to anything related to family planning. One such alliance existed in Putaney between certain Black militants and leaders of the Catholic Church. The family planning controversy has not only been fueled by class and racial antagonisms but there is also the moral and ethical opposition to birth control which the Catholic Church has most frequently expressed. Putaney, a large industrial city with sizeable neighborhoods of southern and eastern European ethnicity, has a large Catholic community. One of the most vocal opponents to public family planning programs in Putaney was a white Catholic priest whose parish was in a black neighborhood. This priest found a willing ally in Oscar "Fireman" Williams, the leader of Black Alliances of Putaney (BAP) who lived

in the same neighborhood. In fact, although "Fireman" became one of the chief protagonists in the genocide accusations, there are some in Putaney who say that the root of the controversy actually rested with the white priest. This alliance, however, never did directly affect the Putaney Study.

Intrasystemic Conflict in the Failure of the PUMFFS Project

Within the research system, certain groups, such as CAC, WCOPA, and NWRO, shared a functional ideology of themselves as guardians of the rights of the study population, and viewed others in the system, particularly the research team, as potential exploiters. NWRO even harbored this type of sentiment with regards to WCOPA, particularly since the latter had been involved in programs to "push" family planning onto welfare recipients.

NWRO's opposition to the research was partially influenced by a conflict that surfaced in the meeting with the research team. NWRO had already been warned

about the research by caseworkers, but they were most annoyed with the research team because (1) the research team had not contacted them first, but were coming to them after having been rejected by WCOPA; and (2) at the meeting with the team, the project director continued to refer to the NWRO members as "you people". Twice he was warned not to repeat the phrase. After the third time, the research team was asked to leave the premises.

Intrasubsystemic Conflict in the Failure of PUMFFS Project

Intrasubsystemic conflict was displayed within the welfare and the University subsystems. Within the welfare system the caseworker has the most intimate relationship with the client population, and this group feels the strongest responsibility for client protection than any other in the system. But since caseworkers also have the lowest status of any group within the system, many of them share the feeling that they must often follow directives made by uninformed higher-ups who do not have to face the backlash that caseworkers are

subjected to when the client population negatively responds to such directives. The backlash from the WCOPA family planning directive had resulted in accusations that caseworkers were principal agents in a plot to bring harm to their clients. These accusations not only negatively affected the caseworkers' relationships with their clients, but also attacked their sense of personal and professional integrity. Being asked by their executive director to draw the study sample for the research team was seen as possibly having similar consequences.

Within the University, Intrasubsystemic Conflict existed between UOCR and the research team, between the research team and other members of the home department and within the research team itself. The UOCR staff was predominantly Black, many of whom were members of Black community-based organizations. Thus, they strongly viewed the protection of the study population as a primary role, both as members of the black community, and as the official mission of UOCR. As a part of that role, they supported the argument of family planning programs as possibly having genocidal motivations, and admonished the

black members of the research team for participating in family planning research, particularly research as methodologically unsound as they saw the PUMFFS Project to be.

Of the three female faculty members of the research team's home department who opposed the research, one was Black and the other two were White. The two white women had been executive members of the PPAP at the time of the controversy, two years earlier. They resigned as a result of that controversy and came to the University. Their resignations were partially influenced by the adverse publicity PPAP received from the Putaney Herald. When members of the research team met with the Herald correspondent who had warned them of the adverse story that he had received, he told them that the source of the story was a former PPAP executive who the team recognized as then employed in the team's home department. The correspondent thought it odd that someone who had recently been so roughly treated by the paper would now come to them with a story. The research team could only surmise that this individual did not want to see (or did she?) what had happened to PPAP now happen to the

department, and assumed that the Herald could probably bring enough pressure to end the project even before it started.

Within the research team the project director and the assistant director[6] were the highest supervisory positions. The contrasting personalities of the two men holding these positions and their different styles for getting things done resulted in different patterns of interaction with the subordinate staff. The director was primarily responsible for seeing the project successfully completed. The subordinate staff came to see him as too demanding, with little confidence in their abilities. The assistant director on the other hand, probably oversympathized with the subordinate staff and made the mistake of allowing them to air their complaints about the director with him. These contrasting patterns of interaction with the subordinate staff only served to aggravate an already growing rift between the two men. This disagreement began with different opinions over the research design. The director was strongly of the opinion that the best method of studying the fertility practices and attitudes of lower income males was to simply investigate the

life styles of men who were welfare recipients. He believed that the research would benefit the study population not only in terms of promoting a policy for better welfare services, but also in terms of clearing up some of the misconceptions about welfare recipients. The assistant director, on the other hand, was convinced that the design of the Putaney Study could only add to such misconceptions, because it did not include a comparison group to prevent the interpretation of the study's findings as being exclusive to welfare recipients.

Intraindividual Conflict in the Failure of the PUMFFS Project

Intraindividual conflict was present among the caseworkers, the UOCR staff, and members of the research team. After WCOPA would have nothing to do with the project, the research team polled more than 200 of the caseworkers and found that 40 percent stated that they were practicing Catholics. Twenty-five of these 83 Catholic caseworkers stated flatly that they themselves were against family planning services and information being made available

to married couples who desired to limit their family size. In every case religious or moral reasons were given for this opposition. It appeared that for the caseworkers, their professional responsibilities were in conflict with their religious views.

As part of an academic institution, some of the UOCR staff saw some value in family planning research. Their opposition to the Putaney Study however was more than just a desire to protect the community. Some were concerned with the possible adverse effects the research could have for them personally in the community. Such sentiments were expressed by the director of UOCR in a one-to-one meeting with the assistant director of the research project (both men are Black):

> Look, I agree in principal in what you are trying to do with this project. But I was a participant in what happened in this town two years ago. Sure, your project might have good intentions, but if it blows up, then I will be the one caught in the community with my pants down because I allowed it to happen!

The source of the conflict between the project's director and assistant director could have been the difference in the professional orientation and the ethnic identity of the two men. The project director was a trained social worker, a field in which welfare recipients are a primary concern, while the assistant director was an anthropologist, a field in which ethical concerns have, in recent years, become a major issue. Moreover, the fact that the director was White and the assistant director was Black did not help matters. Possible intraindividual conflict for the director was due to his feelings that he needed his assistant's cooperation if the project were to succeed, but at the same time questioning the assistant director's loyalty to the project. The assistant director on the other hand, began to question the director's unwavering insistence on studying welfare fathers as an isolated study population. Intraindividual Conflict for the assistant director came from his belief in the necessity for male-oriented research and his sense of responsibility for seeing the research through, while simultaneously questioning the possibility of an

ulterior motive for the work with which he disagreed. Intraindividual conflict on part of both men fed into an Intrasubsystemic Conflict that affected the relationships within the total research team. The assistant director attempted to gain more control over the project in its final days, while the director sought to lessen the authority the assistant director already had.

Salvaging an Aborted Research Project

While systemic relationships were partly responsible for the failure of the original research, they were also instrumental in salvaging the project. The relationship between the project director and his assistant had deteriorated to such a level that it was difficult for the research team to agree on a new direction for the project. Assistance came ironically in the form of a criticism from UOCR in a long letter in which it was correctly argued that the original research design was not directed toward a study population which was truly representative of the poor;

We have already pointed out that we think that your proposed survey is extremely nebulous, and, in a significant number of instances, your analysis and material are incorrect. Permit me to be more specific. The ADCU family is not the typical poor family that you try to make it. They are, as any analysis will point out, atypical of the poor. This is significant indeed, when you consider that there were only two months during the year 1969 that the ADCU caseload exceeded 509 cases. In fact, during the year 1969, the ADCU caseload never exceeded 300 cases for six consecutive months.

What is your criteria for determining who is poor? Although we asked this question during the meeting, we never got an answer. It is our contention that the ADCU male is not "the lower class male"

you are referring to. For a large part, these men earn annual salaries well beyond the standards set by O.E.O. (Office of Economic Opportunity) to determine the poverty level. These men have seasonal employment; this is substantiated by statistics which show a rise in welfare caseloads during the winter months. In numerous cases they were waiting for U.C. (Unemployment Compensation) benefits until returning to work. The ADCU family is not "very much in the limelight" or "targets of intense criticism and objects of great concern" as you state in your paper. A consideration of the facts I have just related, coupled with the knowledge that the families you wish to survey do not consider themselves "welfare recipients" makes it clear that what you have mistakenly done is to stereotype the ADCU family along with the ADC welfare recipient.

The ADCU family is not in the same category as the ADC welfare recipient. The ADCU family is typical of most middle class families, except perhaps, during the six to eight weeks of a given year when the family draws unemployment compensation. Furthermore, these families do "plan" for children and do not have any more unwanted children than anyone else. They also do not have poor housing or insufficient medical care, and so forth.

There are other facts which I think are important for you to know. The ADCU male is not "often limited by lack of education" nor do these men live in a "a culture of poverty" as you believe. The ADCU family does not "suffer from one or more handicaps associated with the absence or incapacity of the father." Here are two very important points

about the ADCU family. In order for families in this category to receive financial assistance: (1) the mother and father must both live in the household, and (2) neither can have any mental, physical or emotional impairments. If they do not meet these qualifications, they would be considered ADC families."

The research team accepted this criticism and developed a new design to include a study sample representating men in the community from all social categories. This was done by contracting the Warsaw County Research Group, the agency responsible for the collection of census data in the county, to draw such a sample from their files.

But even with the new research design, the team knew the project would not be successful unless something was done to repair some of the relationships that had been severely damaged earlier. From the analysis of the original project's failure, it was clear that most of the opposition was due to three sets of phenomena that tended to be related

(1) the conflict which resulted from multiple loyalties as a consequence of individual membership in and/or identification with more than one subsystem; (2) certain individuals and subsystems seeing themselves as protectors of the study population; and (3) not allowing those "protector" groups and individuals to have the input in the research that they felt their role dictated.

The research team came to the conclusion that the best way to overcome these problems would be to go directly to that segment of the study population around whom the greatest potential for controversy existed for an endorsement. If this action had been taken at the beginning of the project, and had been successful, it would have disarmed most of those groups who later opposed the project.

As soon as the new research design was completed, the team went to the headquarters of Black Alliances of Putaney (BAP), explained what they were trying to do, and asked for input from BAP in the planning and implementation of the project. The project was enthusiastically received, and "Fireman" Williams made insightful contributions to the development of the questionnaire and

provided a number of men for a partial pretest of the instrument.

This endorsement from those being protected by other subsystems (NWRO and UCCR) neutralized the earlier opposition of the latter and opened the way for their support of the new project. This support became more positive when these groups were also asked for input into various stages of the research process, such as questionnaire construction and reviews of drafts of data interpretations as they were completed. The research was completed without further political difficulties.

Conclusions

In recent years, social research has become more difficult because of the growing political assertiveness of "traditional" study populations[7], the emergence of public and private groups who take up the cause of these study populations, and the resulting ethical concerns of the academic disciplines. The response of some disciplines has been to avoid research that appeared to have the potential for controversy. This has been particularly true in anthropology.

Research efforts carried out primarily for reasons of applicability to human problems frequently have the potential for controversy. But controversy itself can be the source of needed study, and the ethnographic techniques of anthropology may be well suited for carrying out such analyses. The observation of and participation in activities as they are going on, and the extensive recording of these observations, give the investigator a sense of patterns of interaction that he or she may not adequately obtain otherwise.

The "holistic" approach of the ethnographer is similar to the "systemic" analysis of other social scientists, particularly that of the student of international relations, where the system is seen as a web of relationships between a set of objects and between the attributes of those objects (Burton, 1974: 22). Ethnographers also consider the sociological position that these objects and their attributes can also be systems within themselves, as well as parts of systems beyond the system of analysis (Parsons, 1951).

Ethnographers, however, go beyond the structural

components of the system, to consider also the functional goal of the system, and the ideology shared by its parts in meeting this goal. Each part, or subsystem may have its own specific functional ideiology, or share an ideology with a system beyond the system of analysis, either of which may be in conflict with the functional ideology of the system of analysis. Hence, there may be numerous ideological subsystems that cut across structural subsystems. For example, in the Putaney Study controversy, all of those individuals who wanted to "protect " the study population could be considered a subsystem of functional ideology, although they belonged to different structural subsystems (NWRO, CAC, WCOPA, UOCR).

This myriad of relationships result in four levels of potential conflict and controversy that should be considered in the planning of potentially controversial research: Intersystemic, Intrasystemic, Intrasubsystemic, and Intraindividual. However, because of this web of relationships, there are frequently structural subsystems that are central to the entire research system. These will always include the research team, and in most cases

the study population. Hence, ideological congruence must first be attained within the research team, while beyond the research team, cooperation must first be gained from the study population. If the latter process is successful, the potential opposition from other structural groups might be dramatically reduced. Ethically this procedure is long overdue. Politically, it may now be the only thing to do if one wants to achieve successful research.

Tony Larry Whitehead
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NOTES

1. Although only the pronoun "he" is used in the impersonal case here, it is not done to exclude female colleagues, but because it is less awkward than the use of "he or she" or "he/she" whenever there is a reference to the impersonal case.

2. Great care has been taken to provide anonymity to the persons and places in this study. The name Putaney is fictitious, as are the names of all agencies, institutions, groups and persons.

3. Following is a glossary of the acronyms used in this paper:

   (i) ADC = Aid to Dependent Children

   (ii) ADCU = Aid to Dependent Children of Unemployed Fathers

   (iii) CAC = Citizens Advisory Council (to the Warsaw County Office of Public Assistance)

   (iv) NWRO = National Welfare Rights Organization

   (v) PCAP = Putaney Community Action Program

   (vi) PPAP = Planned Parentood Association of Putaney

   (vii) PUMFFS = Putaney University Male Family and Fertility Study

   (viii) UOCR = University Office of Community Relations (of Putaney University)

   (ix) WCOPA = Warsaw County Office of Public Assistance

4. This phrase was taken directly from the CAC by laws.

5. This phrase comes directly from a 1967 WCOPA directive to its caseworkers.

6. This was the most difficult section to analyze because of the high potential for writer's bias, since the author was the assistant project director. But the section was included because it is germane to the systems analysis developed here. Moreover, it is an area that should not be overlooked in the planning of research which has the potential for controversy. While the reader should be mindful that the author was also the assistant director of the PUMFFS project it is hoped that the more than half decade since the project ended would have given the author time to replace some of his personal involvement in the project with analytical objectivity.

7. Traditionally, the study populations of the social sciences, particularly anthropology, have frequently been the economically and politically powerless.

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